

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits From the USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Taking Care of Business

Good advice worth any price.

University expertise, backed by research and experience, has proven invaluable to local businesses and communities trying to spur economic development, protect their natural resources, beautify their surroundings, and take charge of their destinies.

Business retention and diversification, new ventures, better jobs, infrastructure support, and resource development all contribute to a community's quality of life. People have come to count on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Land-Grant university experts because the right information at the right time can make all the difference.

Payoff

- **Finding work.** To further economic development in **New Mexico**, Extension specialists worked with a city council to salvage a strip-mall complex that now houses six new businesses. They also helped locate a milk processing plant, which employs 15 people directly and supports 426 other jobs in Roosevelt County, and landed a 40-acre commercial greenhouse and 75 jobs in Torrance County. With Land-Grant assistance, a Native American entrepreneur on the Navajo Reservation started a solar panel business that employs several people. His products have largely replaced kerosene lamps in isolated, remote areas.
- **The Green Team.** Retailers in **Nevada** were ready to believe the worst about a new Wal-Mart until university economists showed how working together could bring in more customers for everybody. As a regional shopping hub, the city's taxable sales jumped 30 percent in 1996 and 11 percent in 1997. Nobody went out of business.
- **It takes a village to raise a business.** In one **Colorado** community, university expertise helped nurture seven new businesses through a program that included a business survey, a regional development plan, and a school-to-career opportunity. The business retention and expansion program is part of a six-state economic

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development project that is planting the seeds for future financial windfalls in **Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.**

- **Buffalo meat takes wing.** Bison producers have a growing industry based on the once-endangered animal. Estimated at \$54 million, the **North Dakota** bison herd accounts for 50 percent of the worldwide market through a cooperative that bases its meat standards on **North Dakota State** recommendations.
- **Sowing wild rice.** Wild rice production spurred by a **California** Extension farm advisor went from 40 acres in 1982 to more than 1,000 acres in four years and led to a processing cooperative that today employs 12 people to process a \$1 million crop.
- **Deer crossing.** Deer-vehicle collisions are both local tragedies and a national problem. In more than 1 million accidents, 200 people die per year, and 40,000 are injured. The deer almost always die, and the average auto repair bill is \$1,600. In **Utah**, university-designed big-game overpasses reduced collisions by 40 percent on two highways. The crossings cost 95 percent less than animal underpasses used elsewhere.
- **Sweet success.** Technical support from **Tennessee** Extension helped a gourmet jam business grow from one product sold through 22 local dealers to a line of 10 jams distributed nationally through 500 dealers.
- **Load debt.** A **Rutgers** Extension campaign worked with families statewide to reduce debt. In the first half of 1997, a total of 939 families reported \$712,325 in savings or reduced debt. In one county, 19 participants with an average credit-card debt of \$40,000 each will save \$18,233 in interest fees as they repay their loans. The program has been distributed to 20 other states.
- **Bright idea.** Extension staff in **Louisiana** helped 24 public school districts lower their electricity bills. Savings from the program could top \$3.5 million annually, yielding funds that can be invested in other energy-saving programs.
- **Concrete jungle.** A new soil mix developed at **Cornell** can support curbs and concrete, yet let urban

trees spread their roots. New York City will use the technology to plant thousands of trees, since the mix also quadruples the average life span of most urban plantings that beautify city streets and highways.

- **Common cents.** Fish and finances were threatened when a spillway was damaged in a **Georgia** recreational lake. Estimates for repair ranged from \$22,000 to \$30,000. A university specialist devised a \$2,000 spillway-siphon system that saved the lake as well as local businesses.
- **Fun food.** Cajun cooking and other delicacies continue to attract visitors to **Louisiana's** fairs and festivals. Although it wasn't required, the New Orleans Jazz Festival decided it made good business sense to have extension train the food handlers who would be serving 500,000 people. Now enjoying the fewest number of food-related problems ever, the festival requires all food vendors to take the training.
- **Home free (almost).** Not only did three companies fail to tell a homeowner why his house was slowly rotting from the sub-floor up, one had him replace his roof, to no avail. **Georgia** Extension correctly identified the problem and advised him on how to fix it for only \$500.
- **By design.** Community Design Teams from **West Virginia** Extension help communities make improvements and plan for the future. A client town is building a new road to improve emergency response time. One region formed its own team to work on tourist amenities and started a local radio station.



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